



Sonja Gaines, M.B.A.

Associate Commissioner

for Intellectual and Developmental Disability & Behavioral Health Services
Health and Human Services Commission

Sonja Gaines came to the Health and Human Services Commission as the first Associate Commissioner for Mental Health Coordination with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, a position created by the 83rd Legislature. In 2016, she assumed leadership responsibility for the policy and delivery of intellectual and developmental disability and behavioral health services within the HHS system as the Associate Commissioner for IDD and Behavioral Health Services.

During her short tenure at HHSC, Sonja has:

- Spearheaded the development of the first Texas statewide behavioral health strategic plan across 23 state agencies that receive \$9.4 billion in All Funds for behavioral health in fiscal year 2018-19.
- Led the implementation of the Texas Veterans and Family Alliance Grant Program which provides more than \$20 million in state funds for the development of behavioral health services to veterans and their families.
- Led the implementation of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA)-funded initiative for the development of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics.
- Led the implementation of grant programs with over \$100 million in funding, including the Community Mental Health program.
- Was instrumental in the development and implementation of IDD crisis services through the Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authorities.

Previously, Sonja served as Chief of Mental Health Services with MHMR Tarrant, the second largest Community Mental Health Center in Texas.

She holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from Texas Women's University, a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from The University of Maryland, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from William Paterson University.

Her vision is to create a unified approach to behavioral health services that allows Texas to gain access to care at the right time and place.